

News

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VCC seeks those confident enough to vote twice

Eye Staff Report

CITY HALL—Concerned about the effectiveness of controversial GEMS electronic voting machines in counting each and every vote cast, the Voter Confidence Committee of Humboldt County (VCC) last Tuesday organized a “Parallel Election” outside of Arcata City Hall.

Volunteers staffed a table from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m., offering interested voters an identical copy of the official ballot for a second, secret vote.

Diebold, the GEMS manufacturer, has been criticized by election reformers for its business policies and reports of voting discrepancies involving its machines. California has passed a law requiring a paper trail for all

votes cast on electronic machines – but it doesn’t take effect until next year. The VCC, a recently formed grassroots organization, organized the parallel election for Tuesday’s special election to compare votes and the accuracy of the official tally. The group is dedicated to election reform, serving as a watchdog for local elections and encouraging all citizens and groups to get involved in participating in and improving the election process.

Participation in the parallel election was voluntary. According to initial tallies, 261 people, or about 55 percent of voters who placed their official ballot at the Arcata City Hall precinct, also chose to participate in the VCC’s vote.

VCC co-founder Dave Berman



VCC co-founder and principal Dave Berman.

was pleased with residents’ involvement. “Moving forward, voters can expect the VCC to remain vigilant about monitoring election results,” he said, promising a similar parallel election for next year’s primaries.

Dr. Josh Meisel from HSU’s Department of Sociology oversaw the hand count of parallel votes. He cautioned that the results cannot be seen as representative – or even as statistically conclusive. However, he added, the experiment made clear the value of a parallel election for those interested in addressing concerns about the voting system.

Compare the two sets of voting results at tinyurl.com/af8go. Learn more about VCC at voterconfidencecommittee.org.



Photos by KLH/Eye

Former mayor Bob Ornelas casts his parallel vote Tuesday.